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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Fifteenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 303rd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 29 January 1996, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. CORTI

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The meeting was called to order at 4.10 p.m.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 21 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Bellamy (Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) took a place at the Committee table.

2. Ms. BELLAMY (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)), noting that the Fourth World Conference on Women had been a major breakthrough, said that emphasis now should be placed on implementation. In its follow-up activities, UNICEF was going to give priority to girls' education, the health of adolescent girls and women and the promotion of girls' and women's rights. The greatest potential for collaboration between UNICEF and the Committee lay in the area of rights, for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW were complementary, and UNICEF was committed to their universal ratification, widespread dissemination and mutually supportive implementation.

3. In recent years, UNICEF had been using the Convention on the Rights of the Child in order to assist Governments and non-governmental organizations to write and revise legislation, promote public awareness, develop decentralized plans of action and implement programmes to strengthen children's rights, and it had acquired experience in that area. UNICEF and the Committee could both benefit from sharing their experiences.

4. UNICEF had worked closely with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Governments and non-governmental organizations on States Parties' reports, and in many cases that process had led to greater mobilization around children's rights. The Committee on the Rights of the Child was using the goals of the 1990 World Summit for Children to measure compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF would continue to facilitate an ongoing dialogue and exchange of experiences between the two Committees, and promote the formulation of national development plans based on gender-disaggregated data, sensitivity to the needs and rights of women and men and equal and effective participation of women and girls in their families, communities, economies and societies.

5. It would also continue to oppose all forms of exploitation and violence against girls and women, female genital mutilation, child labour, child sexual exploitation, rape as an instrument of war, early marriage and childbirth, and to address the special needs of female refugees and female adolescent health and reproductive rights. UNICEF felt it was possible to make an improvement in the lives of girls and women, particularly those in the least developed countries.

6. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Committee's priorities were the same as those of UNICEF, and she wondered whether UNICEF could help raise awareness of the Convention among women throughout the world.

7. Ms. TALLAWY said that she thought assistance in implementing the aims of the Convention should come within the mandate of UNICEF, as any improvement in women's lives would mean an improvement in children's lives. Through its information campaigns, UNICEF could help raise awareness of the Committee and its work.

8. Ms. ESTRADA CASTILLO said that the Convention had had a tremendous impact in the Latin American region and had led to changes in their legislation. Women must be made aware of their rights under the two Conventions and the new legislation.

9. Ms. HARTONO, speaking on behalf of Committee members from the Asian region, said that the goal should be not only to eliminate discrimination, but to build a new society in the context of sustainable development. She proposed regular dialogue, exchange of information and meetings between the Committee, UNICEF and UNESCO; that UNICEF should propose to Governments that they seek closer contacts with members of the Committee, and that the members could be advised to contact UNICEF and UNESCO officials in their respective countries in order to discuss a range of programmes.

10. Ms. BELLAMY (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that the Executive Board had recently adopted an updated mission statement, and had recommended that women, particularly in their role as mothers, should be included in the UNICEF mandate. Increased educational access for women would contribute to strengthening the family and the community and thereby help resolve many of the problems faced by children. At the same Board meeting, 7 of the 40 country notes discussed had had a framework based upon the Convention on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW.

11. Ms. Bellamy withdrew.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE PRE-SESSION WORKING GROUP (CEDAW/C/1996/CRP.1)

12. Ms. SHALEV, speaking as Chairperson of the Pre-session Working Group, presented the Working Group's report (CEDAW/C/1996/CRP.1), saying that, ideally, the Group should spend one day working on each country, with each expert assigned to a separate country. Members of the Committee should submit their questions to the Pre-session Working Group in good time, in order to allow States parties to reply. Guidelines should perhaps be prepared for the responses of States parties. Committee members should carefully compare the latest reports submitted by States parties with their earlier reports.

13. The report of the Pre-session Working Group was adopted.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.